Physical Geography – GGS 102-DL1
George Mason University
Fall 2025
August 25th – December 8th
Online

Instructor: Sherry Young
Office: Online only for 2025
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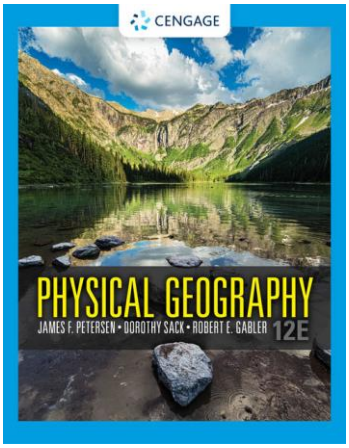
Office Hours: Sundays 2:00-4:00 online Zoom and by appointment

Course Overview: Physical geography is the spatial study of the natural materials and processes that interact on Earth. In physical geography, Earth is studied from a systems science perspective which emphasizes the interactions between the atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, and biosphere. In this course, students will become familiar with climate, weather, landforms, earth processes, and ecosystems through an examination of their spatial distributions and patterns.

Prerequisites: No prior coursework is required, but basic computer skills are a must.

Enrollment and repeat policy: This course adheres to the general Mason policy that an undergraduate course may be repeated for grade up to three times; however, some majors may have more restrictive limits on specific courses, for more information please check with your advisor. Dropping or withdrawing (W grade) from a course is not counted as a repeat in this policy.

Required Textbook:



Physical Geography with MindTap access
by James F. Petersen, Dorothy Sack, Robert E. Gabler
12th Edition Copyright 2022
ISBN-13: 9780357142547

The access code with the etext may be purchased through the bookstore; however, it is much cheaper if you purchase through Cengage directly and you receive instant access. I also believe you can get this content as part of the Cengage unlimited plan if you already subscribe to that service.

Technology Requirements:

1. Regular access to a computer and mouse: updated enough to view and listen to videos online and to complete assignments on Canvas and the Cengage MindTap site. There are several computer labs on campus available for student use. A phone alone will not be adequate.
2. GGS computer lab: lab in EXPL 2102 is open 24 hours for you to use. Registration in a GGS class should automatically grant you swipe access. Please contact ggsit@gmu.edu to report issues.
3. Microsoft Word: assignments will have to be uploaded as a PDF or Word doc. into Canvas. Ability to view PowerPoints and PDFs.
4. Reliable internet access.

Important Dates:

First day of classes	8/25
Labor Day university closed	9/1
Last day to drop – full refund	9/8
Last day to drop – 50% refund	9/16
Unrestricted withdrawal period	9/17 – 9/30
Mid-term evaluation period	9/22 – 10/17
Exam 1	**9/28 – 10/4**
Selective withdrawal period	10/1 – 10/27
Exam 2	**10/26 – 11/1**
Thanksgiving Break	11/26 – 11/30
Final Exam	**11/30 – 12/8**

Mason Core: Just Societies and Natural Science

Mason Core natural sciences courses engage students in scientific exploration; foster their curiosity; enhance their enthusiasm for science; and enable them to apply scientific knowledge and reasoning to personal, professional and public decision-making. This course meets learning outcomes 1 through 4 for Natural Science (non-lab).

Learning Outcomes:

- Understand how scientific inquiry is based on investigation of evidence from the natural world, and that scientific knowledge and understanding: a) evolves based on new evidence, and b) differs from personal and cultural beliefs.
- Recognize the scope and limits of science.
- Recognize and articulate the relationship between the natural sciences and society and the application of science to societal challenges (e.g., health, conservation, sustainability, energy, natural disasters, etc.).
- Evaluate scientific information (e.g., distinguish primary and secondary sources, assess credibility and validity of information).

General information and Policies:

1. This course is an asynchronous online course; there are no set course meetings, as all course materials are available for students to access online. **Note: there are still set deadlines and material will be available in scheduled weekly content folders.** General information about online courses for George Mason can be found at https://masononline.gmu.edu/faqs/#FAQ1?cmgfrm=www.google.com

2. This online course consists of 15 weekly modules that start at 12:00 am Sunday and end on Saturday at 11:59 pm EST of the same week. You may work at your own pace during the week; however, all assignments, quizzes, and exams must be completed by 11:59 pm on Saturday of the assigned week. **Expected total time required** to work on assignments **per week range between 6-10 hours** depending on how fast you read and complete the assignments and how comfortable you are with the material. Some weeks have more assignments than others. Assignments are available a week early on the MindTap website for anybody who would like to work ahead. **Exams and quizzes are only available during the assigned week** and will be taken on Canvas. Late assignments will only be accepted at the discretion of the professor for extenuating circumstances, in general late assignments receive a grade of 0. **Make-up exams will be given only for University approved excused absences** with documentation. Assignments serve as attendance (see table with assignments and due dates).

3. Students must use their Mason email account to receive important university information, including messages related to this class. See https://its.gmu.edu/service/office365-email/ for more information.

4. I will return emails as quickly as possible. It could be a full 24 hours before I respond, please keep this in mind when completing exams and assignments.

5. Students of this course must be familiar with the GMU honor code http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/9798/honorcod.html#code. Violations of the honor code will be reported. Violations of the honor include plagiarism and cheating, including obtaining publisher answer sheets and using AI.

6. Occasional discussion board interactions will occur on Canvas. Please be kind and respectful to fellow students. Remember your audience when posting on the discussion board and use proper academic/business netiquette and language. Review the George Mason Diversity Statement below.

7. Failing to complete work or interact with the professor **will not** result in automatically being dropped or withdrawn from the class. Students are solely responsible for any changes in enrollment. The grade earned will be reported at the end of the semester for all students enrolled at that time. Even if it's 0.

8. MindTap assignments are connected to Canvas once you set up your account with your **Cengage MindTap code**.

9. Read GMU's common course policies which may be found as a PDF in the Week 0 "Start here" module (0) and at the following link: https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/home/gmu-common-course-policies/

Course Policy on Generative AI

All work submitted in this course must be your own original work; use of AI writing tools, such as ChatGPT, are prohibited in this course and will be considered a violation of academic standards. All academic standards violations will be reported using the Academic Standards Referral Form. Student work may be analyzed using an originality detection tool focused on Generative AI tools. Original work is required in this course to meet its learning objectives. Work produced by Generative AI is not original work and will not aid in the learning process for this course.

Assignments and Grading:

Graded assignments for this class will consist of weekly homework including a mixture of MindTap assignments, and discussion board assignments with readings (total 40%), and 3 exams (total 60%). The exams are not cumulative; however, new material will build on previously learned concepts. Reading assigned chapters in your textbook and viewing the chapter-based lectures are imperative to being successful in this class. Assignments were created to further your understanding about the material covered in the textbook and to meet Mason Core objectives.

Type	Frequency or Dates	Percent of Total	Points	Where
Assignments	Weekly for each chapter	40%	400	Cengage MindTap and discussion board
Exam 1	**9/28 – 10/4**	20%	200	Canvas
Exam 2	**10/26 – 11/1**	20%	200	Canvas
Exam 3	**11/30 – 12/8**	20%	200	Canvas

Grading Scale:

Grade	Points	Percent Range	Grade	Points	Percent Range
A^+	960-1000	96% - 100%	C^+	760-799	76% - 79.9%
A	930-959	93% - 95.9%	C	730-759	73% - 75.9%
A^-	900-929	90% - 92.9%	C^-	700-729	70% - 72.9%
B^+	860-899	86% - 89.9%	D	600-699	60% - 69.9%
B	830-859	83% - 85.9%	F	<600	<60%
B^-	800-829	80% - 82.9%			

GGS 102 Calendar – Fall 25

Week & Module	Dates	Textbook Chapters & Materials	**Assignments** (must be completed before 11:59 pm Saturday night of each week)
1	8/24 – 8/30	**Week 0:** set up MindTap and review welcome video and syllabus in the Week 0 Module	Assignments on MindTap chapter 1
		Week 1: Textbook: Chapter 1 Physical Geography: Physical, Spatial, and Environmental Science pages 3-25	Introduce yourself on Canvas: discussion board.
		Video or PowerPoint Lectures in Modules: week 1.	
2	8/31 – 9/6	**Chapter 2** Representations of Earth pages 27-59.	Assignments on MindTap chapter 2.
		Video or PowerPoints in Modules: week 2	
3	9/7 – 9/13	**Chapter 3** Solar Energy and Earth-Sun Relationships pages 61-81. **Video or PowerPoint** Modules: week 3	Assignments on MindTap chapter 3.
4	9/14 – 9/20	**Chapter 4** The Atmosphere and Earth's Energy Budget pages 83-109.	Assignments on MindTap chapters 4 and 5
		Chapter 5 Atmospheric Pressure, Winds, and Circulation Patterns pages 111-139	
		Video or PowerPoint Modules: week 4.	
5	9/21 – 9/27	**Chapter 6** Humidity, Condensation, and Precipitation pages 141 –169.	Assignments on MindTap chapters 6 and 7
		Chapter 7 Air Masses and Weather Systems pages 171 - 198 **Video or PowerPoint** Modules: Week 5	
6	**9/28 – 10/4**	**Chapter 8** Global Climates and Climate Change pages 201 – 231.	Assignments on MindTap chapter 8
			Discussion Board on climate change

		Video or PowerPoint Modules: Week 6	**Exam 1 (Chapters 1 - 7) on Canvas**
7	10/5 – 10/11	**Chapter 9** Low-Latitude and Arid Climate Regions pages: 233-257. **Chapter 10** Midlatitude, Polar, and Highland Climate Regions pages 259-289 **Video or PowerPoint** Modules: Week 7	Assignments on MindTap chapters 9 and 10
8	10/12 – 10/18	**Chapter 11** Biogeography pages 291-323. **Chapter 12** Soils and Soil Development pages 325 - 353 **Video or PowerPoint** Modules: Week 8	Assignments on MindTap chapters 11 and 12
9	10/19 – 10/25	**Chapter 13** Earth Materials and Plate Tectonics pages: 355-385. **Chapter 14** Tectonism and Volcanism pages 387 - 419 **Video or PowerPoint** Modules: Week 9	Assignments on MindTap chapters 13 and 14
10	**10/26 – 11/1**	**Chapter 15** Weathering and Mass Wasting pages: 421 – 447. **Video or PowerPoint** Modules: Week 10	Assignments on MindTap chapter 15 **Exam 2 (Chapters 8 - 14) on Canvas**
11	11/2 – 11/8	**Chapter 16** Subsurface Water and Karst pages: 449 - 471. **Chapter 17** Fluvial Processes and Landforms pages 473 - 504 **Video or PowerPoint** Modules: Week 11	Assignments on MindTap chapters 16 and 17 Discussion Board on Floods in Pakistan
12	11/9 – 11/15	**Chapter 18** Arid Region and Eolian Landforms pages 507 – 537. **Chapter 19** Glacial Systems and Landforms pages 539 - 571 **Video or PowerPoint** Modules: Week 12	Assignments on MindTap chapter 18 and 19
13	11/16 – 11/22	**Chapter 20** Coastal Processes and Landforms pages 573 – 603. **Video or PowerPoint** Modules: Week 13	Assignments on MindTap chapter 20 **Final Exam (Chapters 15 - 20) on Canvas** Exam opens this week but is **due no later than 12/8** Last discussion board about what you've learned
14	11/23 – 11/29	**Thanksgiving Break!**	No assignments enjoy the week off! The exam will remain open.
15	**11/30 – 12/8**	**No assignments, the exam remains open for those who have not completed it as of yet.**	**Final Exam (Chapters 15 - 20) on Canvas, it you haven't completed already MUST be completed by 12/8 at 11:59 pm.**

**** Schedule may change if necessary.**
***** Exam 1 covers chapters 1-7, exam 2: chapters 8-14, exam 3: chapters 15-20.**

George Mason Diversity Statement:

"George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth.

An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected." To read more please visit http://ctfe.gmu.edu/professional-development/mason-diversity-statement/.

Disability Accommodations:

If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure documentation is on file with the Office of Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474; http://ods.gmu.edu) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs as early in the semester as possible.

Academic integrity:

The George Mason honor code is available to read at the Office for Academic Integrity (https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/). The Honor Code Pledge reads as follows:

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University Community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set for this Honor Code: Student Members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

Violations of the honor code will be penalized with failure of the assignment and possibly the entire course upon discretion of the instructor. While collaboration and group learning is encouraged, each student must turn in their own work. All sources of information used within your work must be properly cited.